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Ex-CIA analyst details accusations

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NEW YORK — Nearly 20 years after he first accused Gen. William C. Westmoreland's command of "cooking the books" on enemy strength in Vietnam, former CIA analyst Samuel A. Adams told his story to a jury yesterday.

Adams, who has long maintained that Westmoreland deceived U.S. policy-makers about the size of the enemy, now stands accused by Westmoreland of libel. Allegations by Adams formed the basis of a 1982 CBS documentary for which Westmoreland has sued the network, Adams and two other people for $120 million.

Yesterday, the jury heard Adams, 51, describe himself in a 1981 videotaped interview — parts of which were used in the documentary — as a "galloping Paul Revere" who has tried since 1966 to alert the country to a "monument of deceit" by Westmoreland's command. CBS paid Adams $25,000 as a consultant for the documentary but did not mention his paid role in the broadcast.

Settling his broad frame into the witness stand, Adams meticulously outlined his accusations against Westmoreland and his command. Sometimes digressing into trivial details but showing a strong command of dates and statistics, he gave a step-by-step account of how he became convinced that Westmoreland had altered and suppressed estimates of his own command.

Under questioning by CBS attorney David Boies, Adams testified as the first CBS witness in the trial, now in its 13th week. He outlined a pattern of what he called "manipulation" by Westmoreland's command to keep higher estimates produced by Adams and the CIA out of a special report being prepared for President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1967. The CIA's estimates, based largely on Adams' research, put total enemy strength at 460,000 to 570,000. Westmoreland's command put the total at just under 300,000.

In the broadcast, *The Uncounted Enemy: A Vietnam Deception*, CBS said Westmoreland placed an arbitrary "ceiling" of 300,000 on the totals his own officers could report. His motive, the program said, was to make it appear that he was winning the war and killing off the enemy.

Citing discussions with Westmoreland's intelligence officers and meetings he had attended with them, Adams said Westmoreland imposed the ceiling even though his own officers had agreed at a major conference in February 1967 that their estimates "should be radically increased." But in August 1967, Adams said, Westmoreland's command suddenly and arbitrarily dropped an entire category of the enemy from its order of battle, listing enemy strength so that the total would not exceed the ceiling.

"I was taken aback, amazed, was made suspicious," Adams said, describing his reaction to the dropping of the Viet Cong's self-defense, or village militia, forces. The broadcast said the self-defense forces were dropped by Westmoreland as a "tactic" to "deceive" his superiors about enemy strength.

Reminded by Boies that Westmoreland and several other witnesses have testified that discrepancies stemmed from a "good-faith debate" over statistical procedures, Adams said that by January 1968, "I had reached a conclusion there had been a deception."

"And this was not something that was fabricated, manufactured in the 1980s?" Boies asked.

"No, sir," Adams replied.

Westmoreland, his chin resting on his palm, listened impassively to Adams' testimony. Several of Westmoreland's former officers have testified that Adams was "obsessed" with troop estimates and has waged a vendetta against Westmoreland.

George Carver, Adams' former boss at the CIA, has testified that Adams considered those who disagreed with him to be "either fools or knaves." Carver also said: "Mr. Adams was often in error but seldom in doubt."

Yesterday, Boies introduced a September 1967 cable sent from Saigon by Carver to Richard Helms, then the CIA director in Washington. Carver wrote that he had come to "the inescapable conclusion that General Westmoreland ... has given instruction tantamount to direct order that VC [Viet Cong] strength total will not exceed 300,000 ceiling. Rationale seems to be that any higher figure would not be sufficiently optimistic and would generate unacceptable level of criticism from the press."

Adams and Carver had gone to Saigon to try to persuade Westmoreland's command to honor their commitment the previous February to increase its estimates.

"So far," Carver wrote to Helms, "our mission frustratingly unproductive since [Westmoreland's command] stonewalling, obviously under orders."

In the 36-minute videotaped interview with CBS correspondent Mike Wallace, a co-defendant, Adams described how captured enemy documents he analyzed in the summer of 1966 convinced him that the estimates issued by Westmoreland's command were "baloney."

"I was galloping around [CIA headquarters] like Paul Revere saying, my God, you know, there's a hell of a lot more Viet Cong out there than we say there are," Adams told Wallace.

Adams said he had pointed out that Westmoreland's intelligence officers had been including self-defense forces in the order of battle since 1961. He reminded them, he said, that the forces were included in enemy "body counts" sent to Washington to show progress in the war.

"And I said, look, if you're going to count these people when they're dead, why can't you count them when they're still alive?"

On Jan. 30, 1968, the enemy launched its powerful Tet offensive across South Vietnam. The CBS broadcast said Westmoreland's supposed deceit left U.S. policymakers unprepared for the scope of the offensive.

"What had happened was that we had dug our own grave," Adams told Wallace. "We had been telling everybody right and left, in the papers, everybody ... that the enemy's manpower was declining, and it was all baloney.

"And then all of a sudden you had this enormous attack ... and it was clear that they couldn't have done what they did with the amount of men we said they had."

Wallace told Adams he was making "an awful accusation" that Westmoreland's command had endangered the lives of its own men by misrepesenting the size of the enemy.

"You're absolutely persuaded you're right about this?" Wallace asked.

Adams answered quickly: "Absolutely."

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